

ERCP

ERCP is an examination that lets the doctor see inside the ducts (tubes) that join your pancreas and gallbladder to your intestine. During this test the doctor will pass a finger-thin tube (a gastroscope) down your throat, through your stomach, and into your intestine. This is the route food follows when you swallow. Once the gastroscope is inside your intestine, a much smaller tube (a cannula) is passed inside the gastroscope. A small amount of dye is injected through the cannula into the pancreas and the common bile ducts. X-rays are then taken which show the dye in the ducts.

You must not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before your exam.

Before the Examination

You will see doctors from the Gastroenterology Section who perform this test. You may also see a general surgeon. These doctors work together to care for all patients having an ERCP.

Before the exam the doctor will answer any questions you have. S/he will ask you some questions about your symptoms and medications and ask you to sign a consent form. This form gives the doctor your permission to do the exam.

The Examination

You will be given a medication through a vein in your arm. This helps you relax and makes swallowing the tube easier. This medication will not put you to sleep. The exam is not painful. Your throat will be sprayed with a medication that numbs it. You may feel some gagging as the tube is swallowed. This will stop when the tube is in place.

During the test your blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm, and breathing rate will be watched closely. You will have a blood pressure cuff on your arm and a small clip on your ear or finger. Small patches will be placed on your chest to watch your heart rhythm. This helps the doctor and nurse know how you are responding to the test and the medications given to keep you comfortable and relaxed.

At the start of the exam you will lie on your left side. After the gastroscope is passed into your intestine you will be asked to turn over onto your stomach. You will remain in this position throughout the rest of the exam.

The exam usually takes about one hour. How long it takes depends on what is found. If your ducts are narrow or if work must be done to relieve bile drainage plugged by gallstones, the exam will take longer.

After the Examination

You should rest in bed for at about two hours or until the medication that made you sleepy wears off. Do not try to walk by yourself for at least one hour after the exam.

One medication you were given makes your mouth feel dry. The numbing spray lasts about 60 minutes. Sixty minutes after the exam, you can try to swallow a small amount of water or ice chips. When you can swallow comfortably, you should eat a clear liquid diet for the rest of the day. You can return to your regular diet the day after the exam. The doctor will tell you if your medications need to be changed.

You may have a mild sore throat for the rest of the day. Ice chips or cough drops may help relieve the soreness.

Because you were given medication to help you relax during the test, you should not drive or use machinery until the next day. You should also avoid alcohol for 24 hours.

The doctor who did the exam will tell you the results. S/he will send a detailed report to your doctor.

It is unusual to have problems after an ERCP but it is important for you to recognize these warning signs. Let us know ***immediately*** if you have:

- Increased pain or trouble swallowing
- Any abdominal (stomach) pain (cramps)
- Black or bloody bowel movements
- A temperature of 101° or higher

Call the Gastroenterology Service at (612) 467-4100, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. At any other time call Urgent Care at (612) 467-2771.

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